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Museum Ships

What old historic dust gives back the rose!
What crumbled empires yield the creeping vine!

And these from *Survival* and *Ruins*:

Lead back the tragic chariots of Troy!
The spring comes in to me like spring in Rome.

I might add, and so on and so on, because Mr. Morton's obsession is the Past, and it stalks him like a shadow everywhere he goes; although the other commonplaces of poetry, the ready-rapture articles of every variety, are not neglected, and although he succeeds as little in vitalizing the past as the sea. Perhaps for him the sea has run out, and the past has been neatly embalmed in a general history. There is even a curious indifference about them, as if they were a poetaster's shop-talk.

And, oh yes, the sonnets are very carefully made. They are trim, rhythmic, proper sonnets in every respect.

Isidor Schneider

NEW FIRE

A Canopic Jar, by Leonora Speyer. E. P. Dutton & Co.

This is the first book of a mature woman too intelligent to be content with gifts already fulfilled and creations accomplished. The book, hiding "the hidden thing, making protection for Hapi, who is within," indicates careful research into the forms of verse, and contains poems in various forms. The task of the reviewer is somewhat to disentangle the set of perceptions for which

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the development of appropriate rhetoric will yield most to her ambition.

Mrs. Speyer's ambition is neither historical, evangelical nor journalistic, but esthetic. This in itself is noteworthy. It is often said that pursuits and ideas must now be estimated upon their contribution to the war problem, the food problem, or the proletariat problem. If this were true, every healthy-minded man should strive in a chemical laboratory to find the secret lair of energy, which men will control in the good day coming, so that drudgery will cease, and food and power become so cheap that they will not be worth fighting for.

But in the meantime, if conviction fails us, or an unscientific education has forever limited our activities, there is a phase of thought in which a gifted woman may participate as well as a chemist or war-correspondent: these speculative adventures and flashes of interpretive insight, which, when fixed in pattern or rhythmic utterance, we call art. And if art is to remain as vital as protozoology, or, for that matter, as prize-fighting, its principal concern must be the search for new form, its own lairs of energy, however useless in the end.

In this search Mrs. Speyer is engaged. For convenient examination of the book, I shall take up certain qualities in more or less arbitrary order. In the construction of phrase which shall convey precisely a precise idea or impression, not a matter of verse-technique alone, her imagination is deft. Occasionally her abstraction is as

sharp-edged as a tangible object: "O pompous cry, O puny sin!" These are even stronger, and cling to the memory:

I am the path that my own feet tread.

Gulls flap unevenly through the muffled hours;
Spaces listen in hiding.

Rhythm is of course the special problem of verse. Two divisions of it may be dissociated: The first indicates an inner logic not otherwise shown, or an emotion not otherwise evoked, as in traditional or imposed forms. The other fuses with the rhythm of the fact, as that the old man walked amid the green rye, so that the old man may seem to walk. Movement is duplicated by movement-of-words. Coleridge is full of examples of this:

The moving moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.

Of this rhythm, Leonora Speyer may become a distinguished exponent. The lovely after-battle poem, *April on the Battlefield*—

And birds sit close for comfort
On broken boughs—

Squall, and *First Snow on the Hills*, indicate this ability. Curiously, although an excellent musician, she does not invent musical schemes which are interesting in themselves.

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The American genius has taken up satire. The axe, which has rusted since Swift, but for such bourgeois holidays as Thackeray afforded, is used with new intent and no reformatory zeal. The bias given to perceptions by scorn, not spleen, is recognized to be as true an emotional bias as another; and perhaps, in a world of newspapers and languid religions, the most pertinent of all. In her speech, Leonora Speyer may capture the most mordant and bewildering humor of her time. It is not negative wit, and may not be completely conscious; but it strips away all hoakum, however sweet, leaving our intent and passion like a shell crusted with salt. There are traces of this trenchancy in her verse:

O bottled widow's woe,
Standing in ostentatious row
Within the gloom
Of dear departed's tomb!
Evaporated lover's grief!

A Canopic Jar has unpretentious beauty and clear thought, and no earmarks of vulgar success or sacrosanct largeness. She seems able to endure the inward conflict and sedentary work required even to commence art. And one may be sure that she will not rest upon the achievement of this book, or repeat it in her second, betraying those who have faith in her. Already her Magdalene ballad in a recent issue of the *Nation* is a finer episodic lyric than any in this book. She is able to create passages of such intransient beauty as this:

New Fire

Does the heart grieve on
After its grief is gone,
Like a slow ship moving
Across its own oblivion?

Who shall say that her fire in the rushes, which gives so
fair a light, may not come to burn gold?

Glenway Wescott

PAGEANTRY AND RHETORIC

Rip Van Winkle, by Percy Mackaye. Alfred A. Knopf.
Two Mothers (Eight Hundred Rubles and Agrippina), by
John G. Neihardt. Macmillan Co.

The talent of Percy Mackaye lies in the field of pageantry; and it is no mean talent, as he proved in his St. Louis masque. In pageantry the picture must speak louder than words, and Mr. Mackaye unquestionably speaks louder with pictures than with words. For years he has been laboring to find his medium through poetry. The sensibilities of an artist, and a laudable ambition, have led him to fake poetry; but his words fail to augment or enhance his pictures. Until he practically discards the use of words, he will not be a free artist.

Rip Van Winkle has pageant values rather than poetic. Written as light opera, it is patterned in the usual manner—dialogues, lyrics, comedy, dance. It lacks the snap of light opera, but its pictures and ensembles are distinctly valuable as sublimated extravaganza, and poetically effective as pageant material. The author has a vision for pictorial symbolism in broad compositions filling large